“Alberta is committed to being a world leader in responsible resource development, environmental management and quality of life.

“Developed with input from thousands of Albertans, the Lower Athabasca Regional Plan establishes a long-term vision for managing Alberta’s natural resources responsibly, safeguarding the environment and keeping our economy and communities strong.”

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development Minister Diana McQueen
Lower Athabasca Regional Plan (LARP) highlights:

LARP, which takes effect on September 1, 2012, sets the stage for the next 50 years, concentrating on environmental, economic and social actions including:

- Immediately setting regional environmental limits for air and surface water quality and regional groundwater management framework with interim triggers;
- Establishing six new conservation areas, bringing the total conserved land in the region to two million hectares, or 22 per cent – an area three times the size of Banff National Park;
- The Dillon River Conservation Area moves from a Public Land Use Zone to a Wildland Provincial Park. This change will secure a larger tract of important caribou habitat;
- Addressing infrastructure challenges and new strategies to plan for urban development around Fort McMurray;
- Providing year-round tourism and recreational opportunities through the creation of nine new provincial recreational areas, which will have access to campsites, trails and boat docks;
- Committing to a regional trail system plan;
- Committing to the development of tailings management, biodiversity, and surface water quantity frameworks;
- Committing to engage and work with aboriginal communities on initiatives to incorporate traditional knowledge into environmental planning;
- Identifying opportunities to engage with aboriginal communities on initiatives to support tourism development;
- Providing certainty for industry in development of the oil sands; and
- Supporting diversification of the regional economy – recognizes tourism and recreational opportunities, the potential for further responsible development of energy, minerals, coal, surface materials, forestry and agriculture.

Vision for the Lower Athabasca Region

The Lower Athabasca Region is a vibrant and dynamic region in Alberta. People, industry and government partner to support development of the region and its oil sands reserves. Economic opportunities abound in forestry, minerals, agriculture, infrastructure development, the service industry and tourism. The region’s air, water, land and biodiversity support healthy ecosystems and world-class conservation areas. Growing communities are supported by infrastructure and people can enjoy a wide array of recreation and cultural opportunities.

Land-use Framework – Provincial Outcomes

- Healthy economy supported by our land and natural resources;
- Healthy ecosystems and environment; and
- People-friendly communities with ample recreational and cultural opportunities.
Purpose
The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan sets the stage for robust growth, vibrant communities and a healthy environment within the region over the next 50 years.

With that long-term horizon in mind, the LARP identifies strategic directions for the region over the next 10 years. To ensure LARP remains effective and connected to activities on the landscape, the Alberta government will review and, if necessary, update the plan after five years – at the same time maintaining the certainty and stability on which our industry sectors depend. Any subsequent revisions to the plan require consultation with Albertans.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan:
• Establishes a long-term vision for the region;
• Aligns provincial policies at the regional level to balance Alberta’s economic, environmental and social goals;
• Reflects ongoing commitment to engage Albertans, including aboriginal peoples, in land-use planning;
• Uses a cumulative effects management approach to balance economic development opportunities and social and environmental considerations;
• Sets desired economic, environmental and social outcomes and objectives for the region;
• Describes the strategies, actions, approaches and tools required to achieve the desired outcomes and objectives;
• Establishes monitoring, evaluation and reporting commitments to assess progress; and
• Provides guidance to provincial and local decision-makers regarding land-use management for the region.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan has four key components:
• Introduction – includes the purpose of the regional plan, land-use planning and decision-making in Alberta, and how the regional plan will inform land-use decisions.
• Strategic Plan – includes the vision for the future of the region along with desired regional outcomes. Builds on existing policies and initiatives by establishing a set of strategic directions that help achieve the regional vision and outcomes.
• Implementation Plan – includes regional objectives, strategies and actions that will be undertaken to support achievement of the regional vision and outcomes and indicators to measure and evaluate progress.
• Regulatory Details Plan – enables achieving the strategic direction and strategies and actions.
Regional Outcomes

- The economic potential of the oil sands resource is optimized;
- The region’s economy is diversified;
- Landscapes are managed to maintain ecosystem function and biodiversity;
- Air and water are managed to support human and ecosystem needs;
- Infrastructure development supports economic and population growth;
- The quality of life of residents is enhanced through increased opportunities for recreation and active living; and
- Inclusion of aboriginal peoples in land-use planning.

Alberta’s Land-use Framework

Released in December 2008, the framework sets out an approach to managing our province’s land and natural resources to achieve Alberta’s long-term economic, environmental and social goals.

The framework establishes seven new land-use regions and calls for the development of a regional plan for each.

The Lower Athabasca Regional Plan is the first plan completed under the Land-use Framework. The region covers approximately 93,212 square kilometres and is located in the northeast corner of Alberta. It is bordered to the north by the Northwest Territories and to the south by the County of Vermilion River, County of St. Paul and Smoky Lake County. To the east, it is bordered by Saskatchewan and to the west by Wood Buffalo National Park, MacKenzie County and the Municipal District of Opportunity.